

The line between private and public continues to be explored as we move legislation, and we will be very careful as we examine legislation, as the gentleman from California [Mr. FAZIO] indicated, to make sure that what we intend to do, we do, and no more.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WHITE. Mr. Speaker, until about 20 months ago I had never held public office before. I ran for Congress because I felt that it was time to make some changes to the way our Government works and to make our Government smaller, more open, and more efficient.

On my first day in public office, I voted for a package of reforms that made some much needed changes to the way Congress did business. We voted to apply all laws to Congress, we voted to cut committee staff by one-third, we set term limits for committee chairs, and we got rid of three House committees.

That was only on the first day.

Over the past 20 months this Congress has worked hard to make some much needed changes to our Federal laws. We worked to change our Superfund law so that we do a better job of cleaning up hazardous waste sites, we worked to change our welfare system to encourage work and discourage dependency, and we worked to reform our telecommunications laws in order to eliminate Government regulated monopolies. We did not accomplish everything we set out to do but we did make considerable progress in changing the way our Government works.

Today, I am pleased that my colleagues are continuing their commitment to reform by supporting the Internet Election Information Act, a bill I introduced earlier this year to amend the current Federal Election Campaign Act [FECA] of 1971.

This bill is not as significant as the passage of our first day reforms or our welfare reform bill, but this reform is needed in order to give voters more information and more access to the positions held by candidates for Federal office.

This bill is necessary in order to update our current Federal campaign laws. The current laws were passed in the early 1970's before the Internet was a widely used medium. Today, people use the Internet to send and receive information. In my office, the Internet is a valuable tool for providing my constituents with more information and for allowing the people in my district to communicate with my office. As technology continues to change, we need to make sure that the Federal Government is doing what it can to keep up with those changes.

That is why I introduced the Internet Election Information Act. It's time to debug our Federal election laws in order to bring the Federal Government into the 21st century. With a simple technical change to the law we can help promote more open debate in cyberspace. This change will give Federal candidates—challengers and incumbents alike—the chance to use the Internet to bring their message and ideas directly to the American people.

Under this bill, the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 will be amended to allow interactive computer services to provide free access to their online resources for campaign purposes. The bill allows online services to in-

clude: First, election or candidate information; second, candidate position papers; third, responses to campaign questions; fourth, solicitations of lawful contributions; and fifth, conveyance of electronic campaign forums.

But this is not an incumbent protection plan as so many of the campaign finance reform bills that have been introduced in Congress. Instead, the bill requires that all services must be offered to all candidates for the same office under the same terms and conditions. It's a very simple change that will produce very significant results.

In closing I want to state that this bill in no way replaces the need for a major overhaul of our campaign finance laws. As I have said time and time again in this Chamber and to my constituents—we need to dramatically reform our campaign finance laws in a way that does not favor incumbent members. That is still a goal I will continue to pursue.

But today we will take a small step forward in changing our existing campaign finance laws in a way that will give voters more information, more access to Federal candidates and a better understanding of the issues being debated.

Ms. DUNN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, let me first commend my colleague, Representative RICK WHITE, for his leadership on high technology issues. His service and technological literacy is vitally important to an institution which, prior to the Republican-led 104th Congress, had still been using pencil and paper to balance its financial books. Mr. WHITE has been an integral part of our efforts to bring the U.S. Congress into the 21st century.

We have entered an era when the average American may sit down at a computer and gain access to information on anything from current research on the lifespan of the honeybee to what's playing at their neighborhood theater. Congress is changing with the times, and in that spirit, I rise in support of H.R. 3700, The Internet Election Information Act of 1996.

This legislation enables online service providers to voluntarily offer web sites to candidate—without giving an advantage to any one candidate, and without the site being considered an in-kind contribution to the campaign. This will enhance the ability of all Americans to make informed choices and to more fully participate in the democratic process.

The laws governing campaign finance—written in the mid-1970's—were passed before the advent of the personal computer and the phenomenon known as the Internet. H.R. 3700 updates our campaign finance laws to account for the reality of this information-gathering mechanism. I support this legislation and praise Representative WHITE for his foresight on the issue. The Internet Election Information Act of 1996 achieves a common-sense change in Federal elections, while providing a solid benefit to all Americans interested in learning more about the candidates asking for the honor of their vote. The power of knowledge and access to information—without preference to any party or any

candidate—is what this bill secures, and is another step forward toward governing in the 21st century.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, before us today is H.R. 3700, the Internet Election Information Act. This legislation will amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to permit interactive computer services to provide their facilities free of charge to candidates for Federal offices.

This legislation was introduced after Internet providers were barred from offering free websites to candidates during the last congressional election. The bill proposes changes to the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to allow donated interactive computer services from coverage; and direct costs incurred by a donated interactive computer services from treatment as an expenditure if the service permits its facilities to be used for such purposes for all other candidates in the election for the same office.

This bill is in the spirit of full Internet access and participation of our citizens in our Nation's political process.

However, there are a few problems with the way this bill is drafted. There are no requirements that an interactive computer service provider inform the other candidates in a Federal election that they are supplying a website to their opponent. Further there are no provisions to ensure equal or nontechnical assistance for the development of a candidate's website in a Federal election.

Campaign finance reform is an important issue to my Houston district constituents and their best interest are not served if we do not ensure fairness in the political process.

I am a strong supporter of full Internet access and participation, but I would caution us to be careful with how we go about legislating this access.

Mr. FAZIO of California. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, so I suppose if it were appropriate I would yield back the balance of my time and we could move on to the next item.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, yielding myself such time as I may consume, I would tell the gentleman from California it is probably appropriate, but this gentleman from California is looking for the author of the bill. But knowing our schedules and how difficult it is oftentimes, I will tell the gentleman if he yields back, I will yield back.

Mr. FAZIO of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California [Mr. THOMAS] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3700, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

DISMISSAL OF CONTESTED ELECTIONS BY UNANIMOUS CONSENT

(Mr. THOMAS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, having indicated that he was going to offer a number of unanimous consents including the dismissal of some contested elections, it is my understanding that there is some problem on the minority side in approving UC's, and so I am hopeful that we will be able to dismiss these contested elections in the near future by unanimous consent.

Mr. FAZIO of California. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. THOMAS. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. FAZIO of California. Mr. Speaker, I simply want to comment on the issue that the gentleman from California [Mr. THOMAS] just referred to.

Mr. Speaker, I am hopeful that the prohibition on unanimous-consent requests will be lifted sometime today. I certainly join the chairman in our mutual desire to clean up the file and remove these two contested election issues, and hopefully we will be able to get back to it by the end of the day.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON S. 640 WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1996

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the conference report on the Senate bill (S. 640) to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, to authorize the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

(For conference report and statement see proceedings of the House of September 25, 1996, at page H11158.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. SHUSTER] and the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. BORSKI] each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. SHUSTER].

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, the conference report on S. 640, the Water Resources Development Act of 1996, is a comprehensive authorization of the water resources programs of the Army Corps of Engineers. It represents 4 years of bipartisan effort to preserve and develop the water infrastructure that is vital to the Nation's safety and economic well-being.

First, let me thank and congratulate my colleagues on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for their vision and tireless efforts in helping move this legislation. I want to give special thanks to Committee Ranking Member JIM OBERSTAR, Subcommittee Chairman, SHERWOOD BOEHLERT, and the Subcommittee Ranking Member BOB BORSKI. Their leadership and contributions have been outstanding.

These Members, and ranking Republican on the committee DON YOUNG, also served with me as House conferees.

Mr. Speaker, in the 103d Congress, the House overwhelmingly passed H.R. 4460, a bill that should have become the Water Resources Development Act of 1994. Unfortunately, that bill did not become law, and for the first time since 1986, Congress was unable to enact WRDA legislation.

During the 104th Congress, we committed to restoring certainty to the process and fulfilling our commitment to non-Federal project sponsors, most of whom had already committed substantial funds to projects.

We conducted 4 days of hearings, receiving testimony from over 90 witnesses, including numerous Members of Congress, the administration, project sponsors, national water resources and environmental organizations, and State and local officials.

The bill we bring to the floor today truly represents a fair and balanced proposal.

Mr. Speaker, S. 640 accomplishes three important objectives:

First, it reflects the committee's continued commitment to improving the Nation's water infrastructure.

Second, it responds to policy initiatives to modernize Corps of Engineers activities and to achieve programmatic reforms.

Third, and this is very important, it takes advantage of Corps capabilities and recognizes evolving national priorities by expanding and creating new authorities for protecting and enhancing the environment.

In developing this bill, we and the Senate conferees have tried hard to be responsive to Member's requests; however, in today's tight fiscal climate, we simply had to establish and adhere to the reasonable review criteria, such as the cost-sharing rules established in 1986.

In fact, in the area of flood control, we have actually increased the non-Federal share for future projects. In another area—dredging for navigation projects—we have revised the rules to assure consistency and fairness in selecting methods for the disposal of dredged material.

Mr. Speaker, a few remarks on section 586 of the conference report are warranted. This section is intended to remove impediments to the "privatization" of wastewater infrastructure assets through leases and concessions. The conferees included certain conditions and limitations to address potential concerns about the exercise of this new authority. This pilot program does not impose, nor is it intended to impose, any conditions or limitations on leases, concessions, or other approaches to privatizing infrastructure assets under other authorities. The conferees encourage EPA to make use of this section and other authorities to promote privatization of infrastructure assets funded under the Clean Water Act, as well as the Safe Drinking Water Act and other water infrastructure programs.

S. 640 is a strong bipartisan bill. It reflects a balanced, responsible ap-

proach to developing water infrastructure, preserving and enhancing the environment, and strengthening Federal-State-and-local partnerships.

I want to commend my colleague, Senator JOHN CHAFEE and the other Senate conferees, as well as the Senate staff, on their diligence in helping make S. 640 a reality.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support the conference report.

Mr. Speaker, a monumental amount of effort has gone into the final development of this bill. The staff of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee the staff have devoted over 80 hours of effort to this bill. While it will be impossible to mention everyone who has made this bill a success, I would like to mention several key members of our staff that contributed to this fine legislation: Lee Forsgren, Ben Grumbles, Donna Campbell, Ken Kopocis, Art Chan, Pam Keller and Mike Strachn from the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee; and Dan Delich, Jo-Ellen Darcy, Linda Jordan, and Ann Loomis of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. In addition, the role of the House and Senate legislative counsel offices was instrumental in writing the legislation. I especially want to recognize David Mendelsohn of House legislative counsel and Janine Johnson of Senate legislative counsel for their efforts. Finally, I want to acknowledge the technical support provided by the Corps of Engineers. Mr. Jim Rausch provided timely, expert advice on technical matters relating to Corps of Engineers projects and policies and played a key role in conference discussions. In addition, Milton Rider, Gary Campbell, John Anderson, Bill Schmitz, Jeff Groska, Juanita Guin, Philomena Herasingh provided valuable assistance. We owe these professionals our gratitude.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

(Mr. BORSKI asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remark.)

Mr. Speaker, I wish to express my strong support for the conference report on S. 640, the Water Resources Development Act of 1996, which authorizes important infrastructure related projects throughout the Nation.

First, I want to pay my compliments to Chairman SHUSTER and Chairman BOEHLERT for the absolutely fair and bipartisan way in which this bill was handled. WRDA 1996 has been a bipartisan process from start to finish.

I also want to thank the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. OBERSTAR], the distinguished ranking member of the full committee, for his help on the bill.

I also want to thank the staff of the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment, especially Ken Kopocis of the Democratic staff, Mike Strachn of the Republican staff and David